The VALIANTS of VIRGINIA

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SYNOPSIS.

John Valiant, a rich society favorite, suddenly discovers that the Valiant corporation, which his father founded and which was the principal source of his wealth, has failed. He voluntarily turns over his private fortune to the receiver for the corporation. His entire remaining possessions consist of an old motor car, a white bull dog and Damory court, a neglected estate in Virginia. On the way to Damory court he meets Shirley Dandridge, an auburn-haired beauty, and decides that he is going to like Virginia immensely. Shirley's mother, Mrs. Dandridge, and Major Bristow exchange reminiscences during which it is revealed that the major, Valiant's father, and a man named Sassoon were rivals for the hand of Mrs. Dandridge in her youth. Sassoon and Valiant fought a duel on her account in which the former was killed. Valiant finds Damory court overgrown with weeds and creepers and the buildings in a very much neglected condition.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

He trudged away into the shadows, but presently as the new master of Damory Court stood in the gloomy hall, he heard the shambling step again behind him. "Ah done neglectuated ter ax yo' name, suh. Ah did, fo' er fac'."

"My name is Valiant. John Valiant."

Uncle Jefferson's eyes turned upward and rolled out of orbit. "Mah Lawd!" he ejaculated soundlessly. And with his wide lips still framed about the last word, he backed out of the doorway and disappeared.

Alone in the ebbing twilight, John Valiant found his hamper, spread a napkin on the broad stone steps and took out a glass, a spoon and part of a loaf of bread. The thermos flask was filled with milk. It was not a splendid banquet, yet he ate it with a great content as the bulldog at his feet gnawed his share of the crust. He broke his bread into the milk as he had not done since he was a child, and ate the luscious pulp with a keen relish bred of the long outdoor day.

It was almost dark when the meal was done and, depleted hamper in hand he reentered the empty echoing house. He went into the library, lighted the great brass lamp from the motor and began to rummage. The drawers of the dining-room sideboard yielded nothing; on a shelf of the butler's pantry, however, was a tin box which proved to be half full of wax candles, perfectly preserved.

"The very thing!" he said triumphantly. Carrying them back, he fixed several in the glass-candlesticks and set them, lighted, all about the somber room till the soft glow flooded its every corner. "There," he said, "that is as it should be. No big blatant search-light here! And no glare of modern electricity would suit that old wainscoting, either."

He dragged the leather settee to the porch and by the light of the motor-lamp dusted it thoroughly, and wheeling it back, set it under the portrait which had so attracted him. He washed the glass from which he had dined and filled it at the cup of the garden fountain, put into it the rose from his hat and set it on the reading-stand. The small china dog caught his eye and he picked it up casually. The head came off in his hands. It had been a bon-bon box and was empty save for a narrow strip of yellowed paper, on which were written some meaningless figures: 17-28-94-0. He pondered this a moment, then thrust it into one of the empty pigeonholes of the desk. On the latter stood an old-fashioned leaf-calendar; the date it exposed was May 14th. Curiously enough the same date

He Shuddered as He Stooped to Pick Up the Weapon.

would recur tomorrow. The page bore a quotation: "Every man carries his fate on a riband about his neck." The line had been quoted in his father's letter. May 14th—how much that date and that motto may have meant for him!

He rose to push the shutter wider and in the movement his elbow sent a shallow case of morocco leather that had lain on the desk crashing to the floor. It opened and a heavy metallic object rolled almost to his feet. He saw at a glance that it was an old-fashioned rusted dueling-pistol.

The box had originally held two pistols. He shuddered as he stooped to pick up the weapon, and with the crawling repugnance mingled a pang-ing anger and humiliation. From his very babyhood it had always been so—that unconquerable aversion to the touch of firearms. There had been moments in his youth when this unreasoning shrinking had filled him with a blind fury, had driven him to strange self-tests of courage. He had never been able to overcome it. Analyzation had told him that his peculiar abhorrence was no mere outgrowth of this. It lay far deeper. He had rarely, of recent years, met the test. Now, as he stood in these unaccustomed surroundings, with the cold touch of the metal the old shuddering held him, and the sweat broke in beads on his forehead. Setting his teeth hard, he crossed the room, slipped the box with its pistol between the volumes of the bookcase, and returned to his seat.

The bulldog, aroused from a nap, thrust a warm muzzle between his knees. "It's uncanny, Chum!" he said, as his hand caressed the velvety head. "Why should the touch of that fool thing chill my spine and make my flesh tiptoe over my bones? Why should I hate a pistol? Do you suppose I was shot in one of my previous existences?"

For a long while he sat there, his pipe dead, his eyes on the moonlighted out-of-doors. The eery feeling that had gripped him had gone as quickly as it had come. At last he rose, stretching himself with a great boyish yawn, put out all save one of the candles and taking a bath-robe, sandals and a huge fuzzy towel from the steamer-trunk, stripped leisurely. He donned the bath-robe and sandals and went out through the window to the garden and down to where lay the little lake rippling silverly under the moon. On its brink he stopped, and tossing back his head, tried to imitate one of the bird-calls but was unsuccessful. With a rueful laugh he threw off the bath-robe and stood an instant glistening, poised in the moonlight like a marble faun, before he dove straight down out of sight.

Five minutes later he pulled himself up over the edge his flesh tingling with the chill of the water, and threw the robe about his cool white shoulders. Then he thrust his feet into his sandals and sped quickly back. He rubbed himself to a glow, and blowing out the remaining candle, stretched himself luxuriously between the warm blankets on the couch. The dog sniffed inquiringly at his hand, then leaped up and snuggled down close to his feet.

John Valiant's thoughts had fled a thousand miles away, to the tall girl who all his life had seemed to stand out from his world, aloof and unsurpassed—Katharine Fargo. He tried to picture her a perfect chatelaine, graceful and gracious as a tall, white, splendid lily, in this dead house that seemed still to throb with living passions. But the picture subtly eluded him and he stirred uneasily under the blanket.

After a time his hands stretched out to the reading-stand and drew the glass with its vivid blossom nearer, till, in his nostrils, its musky odor mingled with the dew-wet scent of the honeysuckle from the garden. At last his eyes closed. "Every man carries his fate • • • on a riband about his neck," he muttered drowsily, and then, "Roses • • • red roses • • • "

And so he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

The Hunt.

He awoke to a musical twittering and chirping, to find the sun pouring into the dusty room in a very glory. He rolled from the blanket and stood upright, filling his lungs with a long deep breath of satisfaction. He felt singularly light-hearted and alive. The bulldog came bounding through the window, dirty from the weeds, and flung himself upon his master in a canine rapture.

"Get out!" quoth the latter, laughing. "Stop licking my feet! How the dickens do you suppose I'm to get into my clothes with your ridiculous antics going on? Down, I say! Hark!" He broke off and listened. "Who's that singing?"

The sound drew nearer—a lugubrious chant, with the weirdest minor reflections, faintly suggestive of the rag-time ditties of the music-halls, yet with a plaintive cadence.

"Good morning, Uncle Jefferson."

The singer broke off, set down the twig-broom that he had been wielding and came toward him. "Mawnin', suh. Mawnin'," he said. "Hopes yo'-all slep' good. Ah reck'n dem ar birds woke yo' up; dey's makin' seh er 'miration."

"Thank you. Never slept better in my life. Am I laboring under a delusion when I imagine I smell coffee?"

Just then there came a voice from the open door of the kitchen: "Calls yo'se'f er man, yo' triflin' reconstructed niggah! W'en marstah gwineter git he brekfus' wid' yo' ramshacklin' eroun' wid dat dwag all dis Gawd's-blessid mawnin'? Go fotch some mo' fiah-wood dis minute. Yo' heah?"

A turbaned head poked itself through the door, with a good-natured leaf-brown face beneath it, which broadened into a wide smile as its owner bobbed energetically at Valiant's greeting. "Fo' de Lawd!" she exclaimed, wiping floury hands on a gingham apron. "Yo' sho' is up early, but Ah got yo' brekfus' ready, suh."

"All right, Aunt Daphne. I'll be back directly."

He sped down to the lake to plunge his head into the cool water and thereby sharpen the edge of an appetite that needed no honing.

He came up the trail again to find the reading-stand transferred to the porch and laid with a white cloth on which was set a steaming coffee-pot, with fresh cream, saltless butter and crisp hot biscuit; and as he sat down, with a sigh of pure delight, in his dressing-gown — a crepy Japanese thing redeemed from womanishness by the bold green bamboo of its design—Uncle Jefferson planted before him a generous platter of bacon, eggs and potatoes. These he attacked with a surprising keenness. As he buttered his fifth biscuit he looked at the dog, rolling on his back in morning ecstasy, with a look of humorous surprise.

"Chum," he said, "what do you think of that? All my life a single

He Craned His Neck, but It Had Passed the Line of His Vision.

roll and a cup of coffee have been the most I could ever negotiate for breakfast, and then it was apt to taste like chips and whet-stones. And now look at this plate!" The dog ceased winnowing his ear with a hind foot and looked back at his master with much the same expression. Clearly his own needs had not been forgotten.

"Reck'n Ah bettah go ter git dat ar machine thing," said Uncle Jefferson behind him. "Ol' ooman, heah, she 'low ter fix up de kitchen dis mawnin en we begin on de house dis evenin'."

"Right-o," said Valiant. "It's all uphill, so the motor won't run away with you. Aunt Daphne, can you get some help with the cleaning?"

"He'p?" that worthy responded with fine scorn. "No, suh. Moughty few, in de town 'cep'n low-down yaller new-issue trash det ain' wu'f killin'. Ah gwineter go fo' dat house mahse'f, 'fo' long, hammah en tongs, en git it fix' up!"

"Splendid! My destiny is in your hands. You might take the dog with you, Uncle Jefferson; the run will do him good."

When the latter had disappeared and truculent sounds from the kitchen indicated that the era of strenuous cleaning had begun, he reentered the library, changed the water in the rose-glass and set it on the edge of the shady front porch, where its flaunting blossom made a dash of bright crimson against the grayed weather-beaten brick. This done, he opened the one large room on the ground-floor that he had not visited.

It was double the size of the library, a parlor hung in striped yellow silk vaguely and tenderly faded, with a tall plate mirror set over a marble-topped console at either side. In one corner stood a grand piano of Circassian walnut with keys of tinted mother-of-pearl and a slender music-rack inlaid with morning-glories in the same material. From the center of the ceiling, above an oval table, depended a great chandelier hung with glass prisms. The chairs and sofas were covered with dusty slip-covers of muslin. He lifted one of these. The tarnished gold furniture was Louis XV, the upholstery of yellow brocade with a pattern of pink roses. Two Japanese hawthorn vases sat on teak-wood stands and a corner held a glass cabinet containing a collection of small ivories and faience.

He went thoughtfully back to the great hall, where sat the big chest on which lay the volume of "Lucile." He pushed down the antique wrought-iron hasp and threw up the lid. It was filled to the brim with textures: heavy portieres of rose-damask, table-covers of faded soft-toned tapestry, window-hangings of dull green—all with tobacco-leaves laid between the folds and sifted thickly over with the sparkling white powder. At the bottom, rolled in tarry-smelling paper, he found a half-dozen thin, Persian prayer-rugs.

"Phew!" he whistled. "I certainly ought to be grateful to that law firm that 'inspected' the place. Think of the things lying here all these years! And that powder everywhere! It's done the work, too, for there's not a sign of moth. If I'm not careful, I'll stumble over the family plate—it seems to be about the only thing wanting."

He thought a moment, then went quickly into the library and began to ransack the trunk. At length he found a small box containing keepsakes of various kinds. He poured the medley on to the table—an uncut moonstone, an amethyst-topped pencil that one of his tutors had given him as a boy, a tiger's claw, a compass and what-not. Among them was a man's seal-ring with a crest cut in a cornelian. He looked at it closely. It was the same device.

The ring had been his father's. Just when or how it had come into his possession he could never remember. It had lain among these keepsakes so many years that he had almost forgotten its existence. He had never worn a ring, but now, as he went back to the hall, he slipped it on his finger. The motto below the crest was worn away, but it showed clear in the marble of the hall-mantle: I clinge.

His eyes turned from the carven words and strayed to the pleasant sunny foliage outside. An arrogant boast, perhaps, yet in the event well justified. Valiants had held that selfsame slope when the encircling forests had rung with war-whoop and blazed with torture-fire. They had held on through Revolution and Civil war. Good and bad, abiding and lawless, every generation had cleaved stubbornly to its acres. I clinge. His father had clung through absence that seemed to have been almost exile, and now he, the last Valiant, has come to make good the boast.

His gaze wavered. The tail of his eye had caught through the window a spurt of something flashing and vivid, that grazed the corner of a far-off field. He craned his neck, but it had passed the line of his vision. The next moment, however, there came trailing on the satiny stillness the high-keyed ululation of a horn, and an instant later a long-drawn hallo-o-o! mixed with a pattering chorus of yelps.

He went close, and leaning from the sill, shaded his eyes with his hand. The noise swelled and rounded in volume; it was nearing rapidly. As he looked the hunt dashed into full view between the tree-boles—a galloping melee of khaki and scarlet, swarming across the fresh green of a wheat-field, behind a spotted swirl of hounds.

"Confound it!" said John Valiant belligerently; "they're on my land!"

They were near enough now for him to hear the voices of the men, calling encouragement to the dogs, and to see the white ribbons of foam across the flanks of the laboring horses. One scarlet-coated feminine rider, detached from the bunch, had spurred in advance and was leading by a clean hundred yards, bareheaded, her hat fallen back to the limit of its ribbon knotted under her chin and her waving hair gleaming like tarnished gold.

"How she rides!" muttered the solitary watcher. "Cross-saddle, of course,—the sensible little sport! She'll never in the world do that wall!—Yes, by George!" John Valiant's admiration turned to delight. "Why," he said, "it's the Lady of the Roses!"

He put his hands on the sill and vaulted to the porch.

CHAPTER XI.

Sanctuary.

The tawny scudding streak that led that long chase had shot into the yard, turning for a last desperate double. It saw the man in the foreground and its bounding, agonized little wild heart that so prayed for life gave way. With a final effort, it gained the porch and crouched down in its corner, an abject, sweated, hunted morsel, at hopeless bay.

Like a flash, Valiant stooped, caught the shivering thing by the scruff, and as its snapping jaws grazed his thumb, dropped it through the open window behind him: "Sanctuary!" quoth he, and banged the shutter to.

At the same instant, as the place overflowed with a pandemonium of nosing leaping hounds, he saw the golden chestnut reined sharply down among the ragged box-rows, with a shamefaced though brazen knowledge that the girl who rode it had seen.

She sat moveless, her head high, one hand on the hunter's foam-flecked neck, and their glances met like crossed swords. The look stirred something vague and deep within him. For an unforgettable instant their eyes held each other, in a gaze rigid, challenging, almost defiant; then it broke and she turned to the rest of the party spurring in a galloping zigzag: a genial-faced man of middle age in khaki who sat his horse like a cavalryman, a younger one with a reckless dark face and straight black hair, and following these a half-dozen youthful riders of both sexes, one of the lads heavily plastered with mud from a wet cropper, and the girls chiefly gasps and giggles.

The elder of the two men pulled up beside the leader, his astonished eyes sweeping the house-front, with its open blinds, the wisp of smoke curling from the kitchen chimney. He said something to her, and she nodded. The younger man, meanwhile, had flung himself from his horse, a wild-eyed roan, and with his arm thrust through its bridle, strode forward among the welter of hounds, where they scurried at fault, hither and thither, yelping and eager.

"What rotten luck!" he exclaimed. "Gone to ground after twelve miles! After him, Tawny! You mongrels! Do you imagine he's up a tree? After him, Bulger! Bring him here!"

He glanced up, and for the first time saw the figure in tweeds looking on. Valiant was attracted by his face, its dash and generosity overlying its inherent profligacy and weakness. Dark as the girl was light, his features had the same delicate chiseling, the in-breeding, nobility and indulgence of generations. He stared a moment, and the somewhat supercilious look traveled over the gazer, from dusty boots to waving brown hair.

"Oh!" he said. His view slowly took in the evidences of occupation. "The house is open, I see. Going to get it fit for occupancy, I presume?"

"Yes."

The other turned. "Well, Judge Chalmers, what do you think of that? The unexpected has happened at last." He looked at the porch. "Who's to occupy it?"

"The owner."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Worth Knowing.

Suppose a man leaves New York at noon on a given date and travels westward at such a rate of speed that the sun will always be directly overhead. After making a circle of the globe he will reach the starting point in New York just 24 hours after he left it. The question presenting itself is, at which one of his different stopping places while making the circuit of the globe in 24 hours, carrying noon with him to every station, was he first informed that it was noon of the following day. As he crossed the meridian of 180 degrees east, or west, of Greenwich the day would change. His first stop after crossing the meridian would be Yokohama, perhaps; there he would learn that it was the next day.

SHOWED INSTINCT OF SWANS

Birds Had Learned the Trick of Ringing a Bell to Get Their Supply of Food.

During a recent visit to the cathedral city of Wells, in Somersetshire, a Scotsman correspondent was witness of a curious incident. The Episcopal palace is surrounded, just as in olden times, by a wall and a moat, the haunt of swans, ducks, and other aquatic birds. The moat is crossed at the entrance to the palace grounds by a drawbridge with a battlemented gateway with towers, in one of which is the gatekeeper's lodge. From a bracket fixed in the wall of one of these towers overlooking the moat a bell is suspended, with a cord attached.

One afternoon about five o'clock, while watching the movements of the various birds in the water, the correspondent heard the ringing of a bell, and, on looking to see whence the sound came, he observed that one of the swans was vigorously pulling the cord evidently to attract attention. As no immediate notice was taken of its efforts, the impatient bird continued to ring the bell violently until there appeared at the window of the tower the wife of the gatekeeper, who threw out a quantity of food to the expectant waterfowl.

On making inquiries as to the origin of this interesting episode, the correspondent was told that a number of years ago a daughter of the bishop of Wells, being much interested in the birds inhabiting the moat, taught the swans to ring the bell at feeding-time, at five o'clock in the afternoon. This practice has been continued by successive families of swans down to the present day, and it would seem, therefore, as if the birds transmitted to their offspring the knowledge that when the cord was pulled the bell would ring and that food would follow.

Her Discovery.

"Oh, George, I've got splendid news for you."

"That so?"

"Yes, something that will save you a lot of money."

"What is it?"

"I've discovered that your last winter's overcoat will do again this year."

What is bred in the bone shows up in the soup.

It's a good plan to put something by for a rainy day; a little sunshine, for instance.

Damned With Faint Praise.

An estimate of the valiant Roderick Dhu as recorded by an elementary school student of "The Lady of the Lake" was this: "His character was pretty good because he always liked hunting, he looked pretty fair, he was useful in shooting and fight, and was a truthful man."

Brushing Up.

The other day the H. Lieber company, among other pictures displayed in the show window, had one that attracted special attention. It was a large picture representing an immense lioness and four cubs. Together with the praise bestowed on this group, there was some criticism. "What fool artist got up that picture?" said an elderly observer. "Anyone ought to know that two cubs is the limit for any lioness. This word picked up by a listener was taken into the picture house. "This is rather overdoing the cub business" said the critic. "Any one ought to know that two lion whelps are enough." The people in the picture house were greatly distressed under this criticism, until a friend hunted up a cyclopedia of natural history and read these lines: "From two to four whelps are produced at one time. They are born with eyes open, but are helpless for several weeks."—Indianapolis News.